

**Senator
Deborah Ortiz**

Capitol Business Report



**1020 N Street, Suite 576
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 324-4937**

**5951 Birdcage Centre Lane
Suite 145
Citrus Heights, CA 95610
(916) 961-1482**

Pro-Net 'Directory' Links Small Businesses to Government Contracts

Federal contracts for goods or services can provide small businesses a fabulous opportunity for long-term stability and potential growth. The trick is finding out what contracts will be available, at what time, and for which agency. Just finding the contracts take time and money — two incredibly limited resources for any small business owner.

Fortunately, an innovative project sponsored by the Small Business Administration can assist small businesses in federal contract procurement. Dubbed "Pro-Net," the pilot system will allow federal contracting officers and others seeking to purchase goods and services to search for small companies that can fill their needs.

Such a service will level the playing field for all small businesses and will give new firms a new and efficient way to market their capabilities.

To date, the Pro-Net database features electronic profiles of nearly 195,000 small businesses. These profiles include a summary of the participating company's products and services, its history, business references and other information relevant to potential contracting agencies. And participating companies with their own home pages can link their web site to their PRO-Net Profile, giving them a terrific marketing tool!

The PRO-Net database will be used free of charge by federal and state agencies and prime contractors who want to find small business contractors, subcontractors and partnership opportunities with small businesses.

To obtain more information, you can find the Small Business Administration's Internet home page at www.sba.gov. Click on the PRO-Net section and leave a message for the contract network administrator.

New Legislation to Squeeze Out Small Business' Lemons

For most small businesses, transportation is indispensable to doing business. Reliable vehicles are a must if a business is to meet the demands and deadlines of its customers. To protect small businesses from the costly burden of owning a lemon, legislation was introduced that would further extend Lemon Law protection for small businesses in California.

Senate Bill 1718, which was signed into law in 2000, reduces the number of repair attempts necessary to qualify a new motor vehicle as a presumptive lemon under the "Lemon Law" from four to two where the same nonconformity results in a condition that is likely to cause death or serious bodily injury if the vehicle is driven. The measure also includes new motor vehicles used primarily for business purposes by persons with fewer than five registered vehicles under the lemon law protections.

The Tanner Consumer Protection Act (Lemon Law) was created in 1982 to help new car consumers in enforcing the terms and conditions of manufacturer warranties. But the Lemon Law defines a "New Motor

Vehicle" as one which is bought for use primarily for personal, family, and household purposes; those purchased for business are excluded, leaving small business owners and the self-employed without protection.

In 1998, Assembly Bill 1848 was signed into law which expanded the lemon law protections to include self-employed people who use their cars for personal and business transportation. The bill redefined "New Motor Vehicle," for the purposes of the Lemon Law, to include vehicles purchased by companies with fleets of five or less.

It's time to protect, not penalize, small business owners. Without the protection of the Lemon Law, small business owners are left only one avenue of recourse—to sue the manufacturer. This is a costly and time consuming proposition for a small business already plagued by an unreliable vehicle. With half of all workers in California employed by small businesses, extending to independent business people this important consumer protection is not just a matter of fairness but makes good economic sense.

Managing Your Lights With Controls

You can cut your home and workplace lighting costs by simply turning off lights when you don't need them. Remembering to do that, however, is often easier said than done. Fortunately there are a number of simple, inexpensive lighting controls - both automatic and manual - that will turn lights on and off, helping you to reduce your energy costs.

A simple automatic timer can control when and how long a light stays on. It can be located at a light switch, at the wall plug or in a light socket. A timer will turn lights on and off on at prearranged times. This can prevent inadvertently leaving lights on all night.

Photosensors measure light levels and turn on lights when it gets dark. These are particularly effective with lights that stay on all night - outdoor security lights or even small night-lights inside. If

you only wanted a light to stay on from dusk until, say, 10 p.m., however, a timer would be a better choice.

Motion detectors or occupancy sensors can identify when someone is moving about in a room. These switches will turn lights on when someone enters and will turn them off when movement hasn't been detected for awhile. They are an excellent way to save energy in rooms where lights are frequently left on. They are also popular outside, for walkways or security lights.

Dimmers allow you to manually adjust the intensity of light in a room. Because most lights use less electricity at lower settings, you don't need to pay for more light than you need, and you can change the mood of a room with a simple adjustment. Dimmers can be used with incandescent lights, including

low-voltage systems, but only with new-screw-based dimmable fluorescent bulbs. Other fluorescent lights must have their own dimmable ballasts.

Switches should be installed in several locations if an area has more than one entrance. A switch at each end of a hallway or at the front door and backdoor, for example, means that you can turn a light on and off as needed. You're much less likely to just leave it on.

Beware that some screw-base compact fluorescent light bulbs can not be used with timers or with motion detectors. Check manufacturer's recommendations.